

"Ag Notes"

A SUMMARY OF NEWS, EVENTS AND FACTS FROM USDA

Veneman emphasizes four USDA mission areas in four-state swing--



Missouri Rural Development Director Greg Branum announces home ownership help for Richard Harris and his family as HUD Secretary Mel Martinez and Secretary Ann M. Veneman look on. 6/20 Troy, Missouri

UPCOMING EVENTS WITH SECRETARY VENEMAN--

6/26 -- 10:45 a.m. Joins USTR Ambassador Robert Zoellick and industry leaders for briefing on trade issues. USDA, Washington, DC.

6/27 -- 1:15 p.m. Remarks to the National Youth Summit. Washington Hilton & Towers, Washington, DC.

For the latest farm and agriculture news and information visit USDA's website at www.usda.gov

Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman's four-state swing through Missouri, Nebraska, Colorado and Pennsylvania last week touched on four keystones of USDA's mission: rural home ownership, drought assistance for farmers; support for value-added ventures, and wildland fire assistance.

In Missouri, Veneman was joined by Housing and Urban Development Secretary Mel Martinez to celebrate home ownership made possible through grants, loans and assistance due to a public-private partnership that includes both agencies. After awarding a young couple and their children with a \$68,000 loan from USDA, a \$23,000 loan from Missouri-based Peoples Bank and counseling assistance from HUD, Veneman also announced the availability of \$9 million in rural self-help housing grants that will help build more than 600 new homes in five states.

"President Bush has put forth a bold initiative to expand homeownership opportunities throughout America," Veneman said. "Through this type of partnership, we are working together to help families in rural America realize the dream of homeownership."

In Nebraska, farmers suffering from lingering drought are now eligible for emergency loans in 32 counties. Veneman made the announcement while visiting a Cargill-Dow plant with Nebraska Governor Mike Johanns. The plant—the only one of its kind-- produces corn-based plastic that can be used to make products ranging from flame-resistant cloth to milk bottles. **(More-Page 2)**

Farm bill implementation news—

More than 100 landowners and managers attended a workshop in Klamath Falls, Oregon on June 12 to learn about a provision in the new farm law that set aside \$50 million for the Klamath Basin. The money provides resources for producers in the Klamath Basin to address water conservation issues such as water quality and quantity and irrigation.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will use a ranking system for fund distribution throughout the life of the farm bill. In addition the new law provides technical and financial assistance, conservation tillage and residue management techniques and noxious weed identification and control programs.

"Aid to Klamath Basin farmers is a key priority for the Bush Administration," Secretary Veneman said. "These kinds of workshops help ensure that farmers and ranchers from the Basin area are fully informed of the benefits available to them."

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Quotables...

"By teaming up with Congressman Kingston, we were effectively able to make our case for the essential need for this assistance to the Bush Administration. I am pleased Secretary Veneman made this important announcement for Georgia farmers."

Congressman Saxby Chambliss of Georgia, following USDA announcement declaring agriculture disaster areas in Georgia, New Mexico and Wyoming. 6/25/02



Nebraska Governor Mike Johanns and Secretary Veneman visit with Curt Frost, a Nebraska farmer. 6/20 Blair, Nebraska

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*"There is a perception ...that this new law (the farm bill) suddenly represents a very significant increase in spending on our farm sector that's going to produce immediate and new consequences. The new bill changes funding very little from what it's been over the last four years. The message of this new farm bill is that we can support our farmers while fully maintaining our WTO obligations..."* J.B. Penn, Undersecretary of Agriculture to the International Grains Council, London 6/20/02

## Four-state swing continued—

Celebrating this ingenuity, Veneman announced that \$33 million in grants are now available to producer-owned processing businesses for similar value-added agricultural development. Authorized by the new farm bill, Veneman said "these grants will promote more innovation and opportunities for producers. In addition to opening new markets for agricultural products, these grant funds will encourage further exploration and development of alternative energy sources as outlined in the President's energy plan." Veneman urged agriculture companies to apply for the grants. Application criteria and deadlines can be obtained at any USDA Rural Development state office or at [www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/vadg.htm](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/vadg.htm).

In Colorado, Secretary Veneman announced a new multi-agency initiative to cross-train municipal fire fighters in wildland fire techniques "so they are better able to protect the communities they serve." Costs will be born by USDA, the Department of Interior and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Already more than 3,500 federal firefighters have been assigned to Colorado fires along with 200 fire engines, 18 helicopters and 17 air tankers. Under the initiative announced June 20, several hundred local firefighters could receive wildland fire training starting this week.

In Pennsylvania the Secretary participated in two townhall meetings and toured Wengerts Dairy in Lebanon and Case New Holland Global farm machinery operations in New Holland. The events were arranged by Congressmen George Gekas and Joe Pitts.

## USDA promotes President Bush's healthier U.S. initiative --

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has joined nine other federal agencies to enhance public health and fitness in Americans in support of the President's Healthier US Initiative.

"USDA is playing an important role in the President's Healthier US Initiative," said Secretary Veneman. "From our nutrition programs to encouraging fitness on national forest trails, USDA is helping achieve a healthier America through innovative programs and partnerships."

The President's initiative uses the resources of the federal government to alert Americans to the vital health benefits of simple and modest improvements in physical activity, nutrition and behavior. Research has shown that improving overall health, and thus preventing disease and premature death, is as easy as making small adjustments and improvements in the activities of daily life.

Specifically, USDA is teaming up with other federal agencies to promote the use of Forest Service lands, parks and water resources to encourage physical activities. USDA nutrition and health programs were highlighted at the White House kickoff of the President's Initiative on June 20. In addition, Veneman participated June 22 in the President's Fitness Challenge at Fort McNair where she will join the First Lady on a 1-½ mile walk.

More information about the President's Healthier U.S. Initiative can be obtained through a link provided on USDA's website at [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov). There, information can also be obtained on USDA's Dietary Guidelines and Forest Service hiking trails.